

**Requiem for the Dead**  
**Halloween, All Saints' Day and Samhain**  
**31/10/2021 - 13/11/2021**  
**By Emilia Benno Sameyn**

**1. Introduction**

Dedicated to those who have died.  
This is for my family.

In this document I focus on the past, in order to learn from it, and myself. It does not focus on my parents and living grandparents as they have a right to live their lives privately.

*"Growing Up"*  
*November 5, 2021*

*When I close my eyes.  
I see my dad, and mom in the maternity bed.  
A mom and dad who brought me to life.  
I'm in a blanket in the room where my mom is.  
mom is recovering from my task,  
we go with a pram to my house, the house of my parents.  
I'm in a little bed with a diaper and baby clothes.  
I have a bigger brother and he watches over my crib to see how I am.  
I'm going to grow up here in this place with mom, dad and brother.  
I will learn, be cared for, play and much more  
When I have learned everything I will receive my diploma and the start of my life will begin.  
I buy a house with a woman or man who marries me.  
We also have children and the story continues.  
Every day a new generation, in this world, from family to family.*

*By Eva Spruytte, Writer and Pianist*

In this text I talk about death, and accepting death. This should not be an excuse to commit suicide. Suicide is a permanent end, and wipes away good times and opportunities, it makes the people around you devastated. If you need help, please seek help.

With this text I want to commemorate and respect the people who have deceased. With this text I immortalize a part of the past, in order to learn from it. This text is also for you, the living, and for those who will come.

It's now Halloween, almost eight o'clock in the evening. Children ring the bell, dressed up as monsters and ask for candy. I'm not into commercial stuff, but I like witches and monsters. And those kids dressed up, they're way too cute to say "no" to.

It is through dressing up, skulls and monsters that we confront fear and death.

Admittedly, it's weird how a celebration of mourning and respectfully commemorating death has morphed into a "haha monster" and "ooh so spooky" party. It's quite a mental whiplash to laugh with skulls on October 31 and then to seriously commemorate the dead the next day.

So in fact we would should celebrate Halloween earlier, in Europe anyway.

I'm not really a Goth, but I do like the Goth style. In other words, for me every day is Halloween, but also every day is All Saints Day. It is through black clothes, skulls and bats that we confront death. Thus we learn that death is a part of life, and not something to be afraid of. I also believe that it is important to commemorate the dead.

Halloween and All Saints' Day may come from the Celtic festival of Samhain.

It is then that the autumn equinox occurs, the days begin to get shorter and the nights longer.

The Celts saw this and then celebrated Samhain. There was more darkness and that darkness was linked to death and rebirth. It was the moment when the layer between the world of the living and the dead thinned. Many sages then tried to talk to the dead, their ancestors and fairies to ask for advice and to obtain wisdom. It was thought that perhaps the dead could rise. So people would dress up in order to chase away the evil spirits. They also feared that certain spirits were out to get revenge on a specific person during Samhain. For example, a remarried widower who is afraid of the revenge of his dead wife.

So by dressing up, the ghosts couldn't recognize you.

In Mexico, around this time, people celebrate Día de los Muertos, or "Day of the Dead". The dead are also commemorated here. In Mexico they say, you're not dead until no one remembers you. So they keep track of whom their ancestors were. This can go back up to five generations or further.

With this text we look back to the past, the people who died.

Who was there before? How was it before? Where do we come from? These are very important questions. Things that we now take for granted were not there before.

I also ask myself, how do people want to be remembered?

## **2. Mom's Roots:**

Mama told me that some of the Vanheuverbeke's now live in America. Henriette's uncle (my great-grandfather's brother) had moved to the United States and had children there.

There was also another story, meme Henriette's brother needed to have surgery on his pancreas. It was an operation that could not be performed in Belgium, but in America. What is striking is that nowadays Belgium is extremely good in terms of medical well-being. We do not lack any medical advances, and we've got security through insurance and taxes. But, at that time, the man had to go to the United States. The priest had raised money from all sorts of people to support the trip and surgery. Still, the operation was no miracle. Her brother came back but always needed an oxygen tank to breathe.

### **3. Grandma Henriette's Mother and Father:**

My mom's grandmother, my great-grandmother. Was a lovely woman, she helped people during the second world war. She ran a shop. There used to be no supermarkets in the past. There were regular markets outside or shops. In those shops you had to ask at the cash register what you needed, as is still the case with bakers and butchers.

Anyway, that's what I've heard and read, I'm not a historian. I think supermarkets came up much later, in the 60's. But, back to my great grandmother. People bought things from her, but when the second world war started, people ran out of money. People went to the store and when they bought something they said "put it on the ottoman". So they bought on credit, they were going to pay it back later, or so they said.

So great-grandmother wrote in her big book, the "ottoman", the debts of all people. Those debts piled up, and piled up. One day her husband (my great grandfather) discovered this and he was very angry with her. This way the shop was not making a profit! That way they could get into debt! She was way too good for this world.

Later they had a banquet hall that was also a cafe. They had a barrel organ. They also had seven children. Great Grandmother was a good card player. But she unfortunately had an alcohol problem. That's why they had to shut down the cafe. Mom told me this drinking happened in fits and starts. Sometimes she drinks a lot and then not for a while.

In the days of our great-grandparents, people grew their own vegetables. My grandparents also raised rabbits to slaughter and eat themselves. While here in 2021 I had a pet rabbit and I am vegetarian. Times have indeed changed. People also went to buy or barter food from neighbours.

### **4. Grandma Henriette Vanheuverbeke:**

My Grandma, on mom's side, my mom's mom.

Born before or during WWII, I think

Died around 2016

I have known her and visited often. She was always very friendly but was also stubborn and did her own thing. So she was like me. She had grown up in a family of seven children. People used to have more children back then.

Grandma had grown up in a cafe, a banquet hall, as it were. She had to work early on, as a child. She had to sew and she got a needle in her hand and she cried.

"Don't overreact," said her boss.

As an adult woman she worked in a textile factory, she had to hang rolls of textile on machines and pick up loose pieces that fell on the floor. She often had to bend over. It is possible that this work

caused her shoulder pain later, when she was around 80.

Grandma had a nice cosy house. I played inside it as a kid. I remember a toy gas station and cars. There was also a kind of low bath that was something between a shower and a bath. In that bath she had bath ducks and a ball with glitter in it. There was also a swing, I had turned on it so hard as a child that I became dizzy and had to throw up. There was also a small desk that I drew on, outside. We celebrated Easter there, grandma had hidden eggs under the big tree in her garden, there were even eggs with strings on the branches.

Later she moved to a small apartment, and then she moved again to another apartment. Past her 80s grandma got lung cancer. Possibly this was because she grew up in a bar where everyone smoked. She said to mom "It's been nice." grandma also regretted having worked all her life and enjoyed her life too little.

She recovered and she was fine for a while, but then it went bad again. She was taken to the palliative care unit, where she lived for a while, but not long. She was not euthanised, but they gave her more and more anaesthetic, for the pain, until she didn't wake up. mom and her brother were there when she died. She was in no pain thanks to the anaesthetic. Her health had "deteriorated rapidly" before she died, but it's better this way than being in pain and a wheelchair for ten years, not being able to fend for yourself.

She was, as she herself had requested, cremated and scattered at a cemetery there with a nice view. She was a sweet, hospitable, hardworking woman.

#### **4. My grandfather; grandpa Noël:**

Born 19/12/1932

Died 09/04/1999

I have vague memories of him, but they are positive memories. I know he took my brother and I to his favourite pub, there was a pinball machine there. He was very proud of us. He also took his false teeth out of his mouth and played with them. He would make a mouth with his hands, and then it would be as if they were the teeth of his hand. The hand then "spoke".

grandpa Noël had experienced an accident when he was young. His mother was cleaning the toilet and had put some strong cleaning agent, possibly bleach, in a beer glass. My grandfather came home from a football match and was obviously very thirsty. He saw the beer glass, thought it was beer, and drank it. One small swallow burned his entire oesophagus and he lost his teeth. He immediately had to go to the hospital where his stomach was pumped empty. He may have had surgery, but I'm not sure. He survived, but, he had to wear fake teeth.

So, dear people, never put poisonous liquids in a drinking glass!

Grandpa Noël worked for belgacom. It was a telephone company. The Internet was created in the 1980s, I think, but it wasn't until the 2000s that people started taking computers into their homes and using the internet to the fullest. Now we use the internet a lot and we are even more connected through smartphones and 4G. Now 5G is emerging. We already have glasses that allow us to use the internet, but people were against them. It went against privacy laws that we can film people without them knowing. What's the next step? Brain chips?

Anyway, grandpa Noel worked for belgacom and he also had been a football trainer for KRC Harelbeke and then KV Kortrijk, the football club of Kortrijk. He was also a trainer for the Red Devils for a while, but I'm not one hundred percent sure if that was the case. He kept himself well informed about the football news, he later thought that football players earned too much. It was a beautiful sport, he thought, that had been destroyed by money.

I remember the death of grandpa Noël, I was 4 years old. I was not at his death itself, but I knew he had died. They told me that he had gone to heaven as an angel. I drew grandpa as an angel on a cloud, another cloud blew on him. They had used this for his death card. Then came the funeral. Everyone was crying, I didn't understand why everyone was sad. grandpa had become an angel and was now having fun on the clouds.

They scattered his ashes at a weeping willow, his ashes were thus mixed with those of other people. His ashes served as food for the beautiful flowers and the weeping willow.

It wasn't until a few days later that I started crying. I missed grandpa and realized I was never going to see him again, he was in heaven now. Later, Mom explained that people are not sure if people go to heaven. We don't really know what happens after death. The Christian heaven, if it exists, must be another dimension, or world. For humans have long explored the sky, and there are, of course, no angels there. I don't think there is anything after death, but we can't be sure.

## **6. Mooka's Roots**

Now that we've seen Mom's side, it's time to discuss Mooka's side. I have two mom's. They have a relationship, they are lesbians. I have a Mooka and a Mom.

About "Mooka" In Dutch we write "Moeke" but its pronounced "Mooka." Let us take a look where Mooka comes from....

## **8. The Parents of Grandma Jeanine**

The father of grandma Jeanine was playful as a child. His name was Jean Desimpelaere. He was born in Harelbeke, on November 26, 1920. He was quite a rascal. His mother was cooking something on the fire but had to leave. "I have to go outside for a while, do you want to look at the cooking pot?" she said.

When she returned she saw her son looking at the pot with a wicked smile as it boiled over. "What are you doing!?" she asked angrily. "Well, you asked to look at the pot and I doing just that!" he said with a laugh.

Jeanine's father grew up. He wanted to be a painter, and painted realistic landscapes. They are still there with my grandmother. Unfortunately, the Second World War broke out and he joined the resistance. He also fell in love with Augusta Degezelle. She took a romantic walk with him in the Gavers of Harelbeke. The Gavers is a big lake surrounded by a small forest. "I'm going to do something fun with you." he said to Augusta. And hidden in the green of nature, protected by many trees, my great-grandmother became pregnant. She carried her first child: Leopold Desimpelaere.

I don't know if he got married before or after Augusta's pregnancy, but they became married and Leopold was born. My great grandfather did his part in the resistance. He distributed letters to encourage people to join the resistance, against the Germans, against the Nazis. There are also stories that he sabotaged trains going to concentration camps. Augusta became pregnant again and someone had betrayed Jean. The Nazis stormed into his house. The heavily pregnant Augusta was pushed aside and got an arm in her stomach! My great grandfather was captured.

He was held captive in Ghent. Not far from the citadelpark. There was an apartment opposite of the prison. A woman lived there, she helped other women watch their men who had been captured. Augusta could see her husband for the last time. She saw him, he was really thin and had a long beard. The Germans saw this and fired machine guns at the apartment with them so that they stopped looking. Since then, no one has dared to look.

Later, my great-grandfather was taken to Munich. While in prison, he wrote letters to Augusta. He asked to name his daughter, my grandmother, Jeanine. Not much later, disaster struck. The Nazis behead my great-grandfather.

He was taken to Munich. While in prison, he wrote letters to Augusta. He asked to name his daughter, my grandmother, Jeanine. Not much later, disaster struck. The Nazis behead my great-grandfather.

He died on November 3, 1944 at 4.07 pm.

After that, grandma was born, with her name: Jeanine. My great grandfather's story and sacrifice lives on today. In Moen there is now a statue for the dead resistance fighters.

Every year on August 15, a commemoration is held there, to remember the "Beheaded of Zwevegem." Meanwhile Jeanine's brother, Leopold, grew up and decided to live near the sea of Flanders, many people know him as simply "Pol".

For more information about the Flemish life during The Second World War see:

"The Life Story Of An Ordinary Folk Boy" 2010, 92 pp., hard cover, biography and family history, 21.5x30x1.5cm. Written by Georges Deryckere (or Derijckere) when he was about 87 years old.

We will now talk about the mother of grandma Jeanine, my great-grandmother. Her name was Augusta. As a child I remember her as "grandma sea", because she lived in a small apartment by the sea. Later she lived in a rest home by the sea. She was always very sweet. She started to dement a bit. I remember that it was scary in the old people's home, people had dementia there and I didn't quite understand that as a child, one old woman sat there all the time licking her lips and I found that scary. Me and my brother were playing and suddenly an old man came, took me and raised his fist as if he was going to hit me. He saw the fear in my eyes and let me go. Chills ran through my body, "Come Thor, let's play somewhere else." I said. Nevertheless, I'm glad I saw grandma Augusta every now and then.

After the death of my great-grandfather, she fell in love with another man, grandpa Remi. Together they raised grandma Jeanine. Because Augusta was a war widow, she received money from the state. That's why she didn't marry grandpa Remi, it was a difficult time right after the Second World War. She loved material things and bought beautiful dresses and rings. Mooka, her granddaughter, wasn't that interested in expensive clothes, and I was even less interested. But Augusta was happy, that's the most important thing. Later grandpa Remi had also died. I never knew her two lovers.

I remember her funeral, I was still young, I think it was sometime before 2010, before 2008. People said goodbye, I remember a speech from my cousin Annabel, she said she was eating ice creams on the beach with grandma Augusta, she was indeed a lovely woman.

### **18. My roots?**

As I write this text I don't realize who my "biological father" is, who my donor is. And that's okay, there's no need for me to know this person. It was a man who gave his DNA to help other people. He didn't want any extra responsibilities, he wouldn't like it if suddenly 10 people from all over Europe ring his doorbell and say "Hey daddy!". Couples have the right to have children if they wish, regardless of gender, body or orientation. Yes, genes partly determine who you are, but not who your family is. Your family is the people you surround yourself with. You can make your own family. A good education and love, that's what people need, and that's what mom and mooka gave me.

As I finish this piece, I realize I don't want that child. I suspect my brother doesn't want a child either. I'm too busy making art and writing texts like this. I don't make any money with it, so I have no money to raise children with me. I am already too scared and insecure, a child would make this a lot worse. Only a fool like me is concerned with writing about the past and present, but it takes fools like me to immortalise the knowledge of these busy times. I am like a childless nun. Nuns copy texts, keep culture alive and help others, at least that's what they are supposed to do. I looked at my roots and realize that they end with me. But what I leave behind are texts, poems, videos, stories and drawings that they can then lead their own lives. I make art and texts for those next to me, the branches that are next to me, so they can learn and grow from them.

Humanity continues.

I hope humanity will solve the problems of climate warming and pollution, then spread its wings to go into space.

The time of our grandparents and parents was that of a war that ended, and a man who landed on the moon. Let our times be like that, conflicts ending and humanity taking steps forward.